

Effect of Devolved Recruitment and Selection Practices on Employee Performance at Nakuru County Government Headquarters

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Abstract

Following the promulgation of the new constitution of Kenya in 2010, several functions previously done by the central government were devolved to the counties. County government of Nakuru, one of the major counties, has various human resource functions that have been devolved from the central government of Kenya; these include devolved recruitment and selection function. This change in and of itself is expected to affect employee performance. The researchers sought to establish the extent to which the devolved practices in the recruitment and selection functions have affected employee performance given that no information was available to this end. The specific objectives were to evaluate the effect of awareness of county's human resource strategies on employee performance, to assess effect of county's policy for management of attrition and turnover on employee performance and to analyze the effect of the county's human resource needs on employee performance. A survey was carried out within Nakuru County Government Headquarters which has a workforce of 301 permanent employees. The study adapted a descriptive research design. Stratified random sampling technique was employed and a sample size of 93 respondents was determined using Nassiuma's formula. A questionnaire was used to collect data and results were presented in tables and figures. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings showed that the awareness of the human resource strategies by the county's HR executives ($r = 0.374$, $p = 0.000$), county's structured policy for management of attrition and turnover ($r = 0.391$, $p = 0.000$) and the county's human resource needs that are systematically ascertained with an appropriate plan formulated for satisfying these needs ($r = 0.455$, $p = 0.000$) were moderately and positively correlated to employee performance. The study therefore recommends that devolved recruitment and selection practices striving to achieve high performance should be given first priority by the human resource practitioners at the county.

Keywords: Devolved Recruitment and Selection practices, Human resource policy for management of attrition and turnover, Human resource needs, Human Resource strategy, Employee Performance.

1. Introduction and Background of the Study

Devolution is a form of decentralization that entails transferring of selected functions from a central authority to the lowest feasible structure. In a governmental structure, devolution involves the ceding (legal act giving up) of power from a Central Authority to Local Authority, the state powers of revenue collection and expenditure among others. Past studies suggests that more organizations are devolving their human resource (HR) functions, either partially or fully, and line managers now have far greater responsibility on HR issues than ever before. Most of these organizations are based in various European countries and in the United States of America (Brandl, Madsen & Madsen, 2009).

The HR function provides services to its internal customers and which is constantly being challenged to improve service quality and in turn nurture further organizational development (Heskett *et al*, 1994). In Africa; the interests on devolved system of government have increased overtime. A devolved HR management function has been preferred to a centralized staff management structures and systems. Public sector reforms expected to address these challenges have achieved minimal results according to Africa Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM, 2005). One of the central features of ongoing debate on strategic human resource management approaches is the importance of devolving HR function (Budhwar & Khatri, 2002).

Public services in many African countries are confronted with challenges, which constrain their delivery capacities (Lienert, 2003), they include the human resource management factor, relating to shortages of the manpower in terms of numbers and key competencies, lack of appropriate mindsets, and socio- psychological dispositions. There is also the perennial problem of the shortage of financial and material logistics that are necessary to support effective service delivery. County governments have also experienced degrading in both ethics and accountability in the public sector as they deliver services to its citizen.

In the Kenyan case, the current Centralized System Government headquarter has transferred HR functions to the 47 Counties listed on the First Schedule of CoK 2010. Each of these Counties has since formed the County

Governments comprising of the County Assemblies and County Executives with State powers of legislature – law making and Executive – Implementing the Laws and Policies respectively.

Nakuru County is such devolved unit and due to its ethnic diversity and cosmopolitan nature it was selected as the unit of study. Nakuru County is situated in the central part of the Great Rift Valley with a population of approximately 2 million people. Further, Schou and Haug (2005) noted that the major concerns over devolution in ethnically diverse societies are that it encourages ethnic identification, accentuates inter-group differences and fosters discrimination against local minorities.

Lankeu and Maket (2012), in their study on public service delivery in Kenya, revealed that the public service for a long time has been characterized by corruption, low productivity, inefficiency and lack of transparency and accountability. Though there are a few studies that have reported positive outcomes of devolution of HR function (Daly, 2007) and (Cheruiyot & Kaswira, 2013), there are equally numerous inherent problems within the framework of devolution that can seriously undermine the positive outcomes reported that require to be studied. There is also overwhelming evidence showing that the success of devolution is dependent on the design and implementation of the devolution framework (Ter Minassian, 1997).

Transition Authority (T.A) is an organ of government in the devolution process tasked with identifying achievements, challenges and ways for better service delivery. Key to the devolution process is the transfer of human resources functions from the central government to the county governments. Since the adoption of devolved system of government was enacted in Kenya in the year 2010, the T.A has reported on status of HR devolution in a yearly basis. In the year 2015, the report by the transition authority indicates various achievements, challenges and lesson learned for better services delivery. Effect of devolved HR functions on employee performance forms part of the service delivery at the county which forms the focus of my study, (Transition Authority Report 2015).

After the transfer of management of human resources for devolved functions was affected in January 2014, a number of challenges have been observed which include: Discrimination, nepotism, tribalism, cronyism patronage, and victimization in the recruitment of county staff. These challenges were as a result of unprofessional HR practices at the county governments that related to recruitment and selection, Transition Authority Report (2015).

Recruitment and selection practices were to follow policies, needs and strategy of the county governments as recommended by transition report so as to curd unprofessionalism, (Transition Authority Report 2015). Despite gains of these recommendations, the extent of benefits in regard to the effect they have on employee performance at Nakuru County Government is yet to be examined.

This research therefore aims at evaluating the effect of devolved recruitment and selection on employee performance at the county government of Nakuru. Recruitment and selection practices were selected due to the critical role they play in influencing employee performance in the work place (PSC 2014). Research studies have produced compelling evidence that relate human resource functions to performance. Key to this functions are; recruitment and selection. These functions form part of the matching model of human resource management (Collins & Druten 2003). In this study, independent variables was measured in terms of county human resource strategy, county policy on attrition and turnover and county human resource needs while employee Performance was measured in terms of expected behavior and task related aspects.

2. Statement of the Problem

Despite the potential gains of the HR devolution strategy in the counties, little empirical work has been done to establish the effect of devolved recruitment and selection practices on employee performance. One of the study conducted in Nakuru highlighted only the challenges of devolved HR functions and the possible solutions of mitigating these challenges (Cheruiyot & Kaswira, 2013) but the extent to which these devolved HR functions have affected employee performance at Nakuru County has not been established. A study done by Alande (2013) in the public sector focused on the role of human resource management in devolution of counties in Kenya while Mwikali & Wafula, (2015) and Mutua, Kabare & Namusonge (2013) looked at devolution in a general sense in Mombasa and Nairobi counties respectively. More research is therefore needed to address the effect of devolution of HR functions on employee performance. The present research therefore evaluates the effect of devolved human resource practices on employee performance at Nakuru County Government Headquarters.

3. Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will likely be useful to the County Government of Nakuru since it evaluates the extent of the benefits on devolved recruitment and selection practices on employee performance. The study's findings and recommendations if well implemented will likely improve recruitment & selection practices at the county government leading to better retention of skilled employees and increased performance. The study findings can benefit management team, HR professionals, other counties and government in general that are responsible in performing human resource functions since better knowledge of recruitment and selection practices will enhance

performance.

4.0 Research Gaps

Existing studies have illustrated how HR practices played an important role in the performance of organizations, particularly in banking industry. Effect of human resource management on firm performance has received considerable importance in last 25 years showing effective connection between HR practices and firm performance (Qureshi, et al., 2010). Thus, there is a need to show how HR is interlinked with all the managerial functions involved in the practices of recruitment and selection and how these practices influence employee performance in the public sector.

The County Governments have had a huge labour workforce as a result of hiring of new staff without consulting the relevant departments at national or central government offices. While some investigations have been initiated in different countries, the available literature highlights that most of the studies examining the relationship between HRM and performance have been conducted on the organizational performance mostly in the developed countries. Few of these studies have been done in Kenya, particularly in the public sector touching on devolution of HR functions and employee performance. There is, therefore, a great need for additional evidence to support the devolved HR functions and performance relationship from different sectors and contexts.

4.1 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to assess the effect of recruitment and selection practices on employee performance at Nakuru County Government Headquarters. The specific objectives were;

- i) To evaluate the effect of awareness of county's human resource strategies on employee Performance.
- ii) To assess effect of county's policy for management of attrition and turnover on employee Performance.
- iii) To analyze the effect of the county's human resource needs on employee performance.

Employee Performance

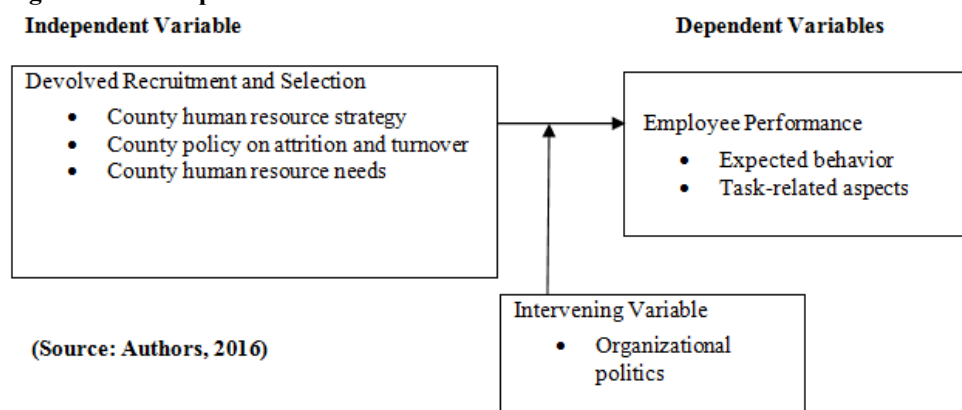
In discipline of human resource management, different writers suggest the following indicators for measuring performance and they include: completion of tasks assigned on a daily or hourly basis; customer satisfaction that can be measured by the number of royal customers and customer feedback; ability to volunteer in tasks not stipulated in the agreement terms; ability to keep confidential documents and portray traits of an organization citizenship behavior; abilities to suggest procedure changes to improve performance; absenteeism/tardiness observed when employees absent themselves from work; and achievements of objectives measured when an employee has surpassed his/her set targets, he/she is then considered to have performed well to achieve objectives (Hakala, 2008; Armstrong, 2006).

Both organization corporate performance and individual performance can therefore be easily measured in terms of task related aspects and expected behavior and rewarded accordingly on how well they have performed. It is increasingly being recognized that planning and an enabling environment have a critical effect on individual performance, with performance goals and standards, appropriate resources, guidance and support from managers all being central (Torrington, Hall & Stephen, 2008).

4.2 Conceptual Framework

This section assesses the research variables derived from the literature to test whether there are significant relationships between the independent variable and dependent variable. It focuses on the determinant variables identified in the study, which would be associated with employee performance at Nakuru County Government headquarters.

Figure 4.2 Conceptual Framework



(Source: Authors, 2016)

5. Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey design. The design was applicable to the study since it enabled the researcher to study the relationship between devolved recruitment and selection practices and their effect on employee performance. A case study method was also chosen and was found to be more practical as a result of both the unique nature and special research case of Nakuru county government headquarters.

6.0 Summary on the Effect of Devolved Recruitment and Selection Practices on Employee Performance.

According to Huselid (1995) recruitment is defined as searching for candidates with the desired knowledge, skills and experience to allow an organization to select the most appropriate people to fill job vacancies against defined position descriptions and specifications. Once a pool of candidates has been identified through the recruitment process the most appropriate candidate, or candidates are identified through a selection process including but not limited to interviewing, reference checking and testing (Huselid, 1995). The purpose of the selection process is to ensure that the best person or people are appointed to the role or roles using effective, fair and equitable assessment activities,. In this study, recruitment and selection process at the county government of Nakuru was examined on how it is carried out in regard to human resource needs of the county, long term objectives of the county and strategies used to get the best employees in terms of quality and types of skills required.

The results in these study confirmed that employee performance is directly affected by devolved recruitment & Selection practices at Nakuru County Government Headquarters. In respect to the study objectives, the findings were summarized as follows;

Devolved recruitment and selection practices at Nakuru county government were found having an effect on employee performance according to the data analyzed. The finding revealed that the respondents were of the opinion that County's executives are fully aware of the human resource strategies. It was also revealed that the respondents were of the opinion that the county has a structured policy for management of attrition and turnover and that the county's human resource needs are systematically ascertained and an appropriate plan is formulated for satisfying the needs. All these factors had a positive effect on employee performance.

The findings concur with research done by Al Qudah, Osman & HamzahEdris (2014) that confirms a significant association between recruitment & selection practices and employee performance with a positive relationship effect. Compelling research work has established the impact of human resource management practices on both employee and corporate performance, these practices include recruitment and selection which provides policies and structures through which performance is realized and improved (Delaney & Huselid, 1996; Noe, et al., 2004).

6.1 Correlation Analysis

Correlation coefficients measure the strength of association between two variables. A positive correlation indicates the extent to which those variables increase or decrease in parallel; a negative correlation indicates the extent to which one variable increases as the other decreases. Pearson's correlation analysis was therefore performed to determine the existence, significance and degree of association of the variables. These results were summarized in table 6.2.

The correlation results shown in Table 6.2 revealed that the full awareness by the county's executives of the human resource strategies has a significant influence on employee performance ($r = 0.374$, $p = 0.000$). Also the results shows that the county has a policy for management of attrition and turnover which has a significant influence on employee performance ($r = 0.391$, $p = 0.000$). Finally the correlation results revealed that the county's human resource needs are systematically ascertained and an appropriate plan is formulated for satisfying the needs thus having a significant influence on employee performance ($r = 0.455$, $p = 0.000$).

According to the correlation results, county human resource needs and formulation of appropriate plan to satisfy these needs has the greatest contribution to employee performance followed by county structured policy for management of attrition and turnover and lastly awareness by the county's HR executives of the human resource strategies as shown in table 6.1.

Table 6.1
Summary of Correlation

		County HR Strategy	County HR Policy	County HR needs	Employee Performance
County	pearson's	1.00			
HR Strategy	sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	93			
County	pearson's	.636**	1.00		
HR Policy	sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	93	93		
County	pearson's	.675**	.643**	1.00	
HR needs	sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	93	93	93	
Employee	pearson's	.374**	.391**	.455**	1.00
Performance	sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	93	93	93	93

** Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source, Researcher (2016)

6.2 Hypothesis Testing

To test the hypothesis, correlation analyses were performed on recruitment and selection practices and employee performance at 0.01 significant level. Results were shown in table 6.2

Table 6.2
Results of Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis	Hypothesis Statements	p-value	Remarks
H0 ₁	No significant effect of Awareness of human resource strategies by the county executive's on employee Performance.	0.000	Reject
H0 ₂	No significant effect of policy for management of attrition and turnover on employee Performance.	0.000	Reject
H0 ₃	No significant effect of the county's human resource needs on employee performance.	0.000	Reject

6.2.1 Summary of the Hypothesis.

According to the results, the p-value .000 is less than 0.01 ($p < 0.01$) except for the exit interview ($p = 0.112$). The null hypothesis was that devolved recruitment and selection practices have no effect on employee performance. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected and concluded that devolved recruitment and selection practices have significant effect on employee performance except for the exit interview. The null hypothesis for exit interviews was therefore accepted and concluded that exit interview practice at the county government of Nakuru has no significant effect on employee performance.

The findings concur with research done by Al Qudah, Osman, & HamzahEdris (2014) that confirms a significant association between recruitment & selection and employee performance with a positive relationship effect. Other related studies show that performance differences across firms can be attributed to the variance in the firms' strategic resources and capabilities. Resources that are unique, valuable, difficult to find or copied by other firms can provide a good foundation for organizations to have a competitive advantages (Garud & Kumaraswamy, 2005). This implies that recruitment and selection practices should be given first priority by the human resource practitioners.

Robbins (1991) also established that there exists a significant relationship between recruitment and selection practices and employee performance. He reiterates that recruitment policies and procedures determine the caliber of employees acquired by the organization. Highly qualified and competent employees are therefore employed which it turns lead to improved performance. Mullins (1999) also points out the key role of planning prior to recruiting and selecting employees for various positions in the organization so as to ensure that the most qualified applicants get the job which ultimately improve performance.

Human resources are unique resources obtained through the process of recruitment and selection procedures. Resick (2007) states that human capital signifies the combined intelligence and experience of staff as a source of competitive advantage that cannot be imitated by rivals. Such work force can only be acquired through effective recruitment and selection procedures.

7. Conclusion

According to the findings from the study, it was revealed that devolved recruitment and selection practices at Nakuru county government headquarters had a strong effect on employee performance. In particular most of the employees were of opinion that County's HR executives are fully aware of the business needs and strategies and that all major jobs are subject to formal job analysis. The findings concur with research done by Al Qudah, Osman, & HamzahEdris (2014) that confirms a significant association between recruitment & selection and employee performance with a positive relationship effect.

8. Recommendation

The following recommendations were with regards to the findings:

Nakuru county Government should carry out its recruitment and selection practices in a professional way. In order to achieve competitive advantage, employees play a vital role in organization performance without whom it will be entirely difficult for firms to be competitive (Bohlander, Snell & Sherman, 2001). They agree to the fact that organization performance is directly linked to organization's employee ability, knowledge and skills. The county should therefore carry out human resource strategies, policy and needs training for HR executives in order to ensure that they are fully aware about them.

Also, since the findings concur with research done by Al Qudah, Osman & HamzahEdris (2014) that confirms a significant association between recruitment & selection and employee performance with a positive relationship effect together with other related studies that shows performance differences across firms which can be attributed to the variance in the firms strategic resources and capabilities. Resources that are valuable, unique, and difficult to imitate at Nakuru county government can provide the basis for firms' competitive advantages (Garud & Kumaraswamy, 2005). This implies that recruitment and selection practices should be given first priority by the human resource practitioners at the county.

9. Suggestions for Further Research

The study was only based on Nakuru county government. it is therefore recommended that a similar study be carried out at the National government and at other devolved counties in Kenya so as to ascertain whether the findings would be the same.

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